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 561

| | Lou | | Western Jikany |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Gwong* | *Gwong indit*<br>*Carboc*<br>*Nyamnyam* | *Tangkwer* | *Tangkwer*<br>*Karam* |
| *Luac* | *Luac indit*<br>*Karam*<br>*Camthoari* | *Rol* | *Rol*<br>*Pilual* |
| *Lithgac* | *Lieth indit (inbor)*<br>*Lieth intot (incar)*<br>*Caiyat (Pilual)* | *Juong* | *Juong*<br>*Majaani* |
| *Rialmac* | *Rialmac (Rialdang) indit*<br>*Kwekoryoam* | *Bildeang* | *Bildeang* |

## III

In seeking to understand how membership of an age-set determines a man's behaviour we have first to realize that there is no purposive education or moral training in the procedure of initiation. Also, many of the characteristic features of the age-set system in Kenya, where it is most highly developed, are absent in the Nuer variation. There are not three distinct age-grades of boys, warriors, and elders through which the sets pass, for a boy who is initiated into manhood remains in this grade for the rest of his life. Warriors are not prohibited from marrying and they neither enjoy privileges nor suffer restrictions different from those of other male adults. The sets have no administrative, juridical, or other specific political functions and the country is not handed over to their care. The sets have no definite military functions. Indeed, we are of the opinion that the Nuer age-set system ought not to be described as a military organization, though some writers give it this character. Youths who have recently been initiated are anxious for their first raid, and consider that they ought to earn for their set a reputation for valour, and it is likely that raids were generally conducted in the main by men of the most junior set. However, there is no grade of warriorhood through which the age-sets pass nor a grade of elderhood into which they enter. Were boys and old men to take part in warfare against other Nuer they would probably be killed, and it is understandable that raids are the occupation of the strongest and fleetest,

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561 701 though many middle-aged men accompany the expeditions and always have their share in inter-tribal fighting and local disputes.

The age-set system of a tribe is in no way its military organization. Men fight by villages and by tribal sections and not by sets. The war companies are local units and not age-set units, and within a company men of different sets fight side by side, though, especially in raids, most of the warriors would be members of the two most junior sets. Kinship and local ties determine a man's place in the ranks. Hence the age-sets are not regiments, though wars and raids are often spoken of as the actions of a certain set because they took place during the initiation period of this set and its members took the most prominent part in them, since skill in arms, love of adventure, and desire for booty are the privileges of youth.

561 885 It is in more general social relations, chiefly of a domestic and kinship order, and not in political relations that behaviour is specifically determined by the positions of persons in age-set structure. When a boy passes into the grade of manhood his domestic duties and privileges are radically altered. His change of status is epitomized in the taboo on milking which comes into force on the day of his initiation and continues for the rest of his life, but it is expressed also in other domestic tasks, in habits of eating, and so forth. At initiation a youth receives from his father or uncle a spear and becomes a warrior. He is also given an ox, from which he takes an ox-name, and becomes a herdsman. From now on, till he is a husband and father, his chief interests are dancing and love-making. Then he becomes 'a true man': 'he has fought in war and not run away; he has duelled with his age-mates; he has cultivated his gardens; he has married a wife'.

[784]

There is a sudden and great change in status from boyhood to manhood, but the modes of behaviour which differentiate these two grades do not distinguish one set from another, for the privileges of manhood are enjoyed by members of all the sets equally. Nevertheless, the sets are stratified by seniority and there are well-defined relationships between them. Before summarizing these patterns of inter-set behaviour we touch on some general characteristics of the whole system.

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561 in the lists above. Thus one speaks of the *Piluali*, the *Karamni*, the *Ruobni*, the *Lithgacni*, the *Thutni*, the *Rialmacni*, the *Makeri*, the *Nyamnyamni*, etc.

## XI.

881 867 In seeking to understand the social action of the Nuer age-set system I think that we should first of all abandon the idea that there is any purposive education in initiation. Neither in connection with the cutting nor during any subsequent stage does the initiation of the boys include educational or moral training. It is true that a father may admonish his son at this time to be brave in war, to avoid the wives of other men, to be generous, and never to display greed, but such advice is of the general kind which may be given unsystematically at any time during boyhood. I could find no evidence that there is any kind of teaching of the boys during initiation, either of technique or of traditions. Nor was I told upon repeated enquiry that there was any moral instruction.

561 114 I cannot agree with Stigand's description of the Nuer age-sets in this respect and I think that he was largely reading into them the purpose and methods of the Masai system with which he was familiar. He wrote of initiated youths: "When finished they are trained by the old class; the training includes mock battles, fighting with sticks and pelting one another with balls of dried clay—to learn quickness in avoiding spear thrusts. After two years the training is complete, the old class then retire and gradually get married whilst the new class having finished their training go back to live in their villages." He says: "The newly-made warrior may not marry until relieved by the next class."[1] I found nothing which could confirm this account of two-years' training and the prohibition of marriage on the older class during the training of the set which was to replace it, and there is nothing in Jackson's account and little in the recent paper by Father Crazzolara which bears it out.

561 701 I think, moreover, that the Nuer age-sets are only incidentally a military system at all, though Stigand and, less dogmatically, Jackson give them this character. It is perfectly true that in warfare the junior age-sets play the chief part, but this is simply due to the fact that they are old enough, and yet not too old, to fight. Boys do not take part in

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 117.

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warfare because they would certainly be killed if they did and the same applies to old men. Nevertheless a good number of the older men who are more active than fellow-members of their age-set will accompany expeditions. Moreover, war is organised by tribal sections based on locality and communal sentiment and not by the age-set system. The whole of a district or a tribe is summoned to take part in a feud or in a raid on the Dinka, and anyone will accompany the expedition who wishes to do so. They do not call up certain age-sets and leave others at home. During the actual fighting, while it is natural that people of roughly the same age will fight side by side, there is nothing compulsive about this arrangement and men of all ages fight together as a section. Thus when two sections unite for warfare we shall find the men of each section fighting with their section and not with their age-set. In the same way a man is not expected to fight only warriors of his own age-set but will engage with whomsoever he finds opposite to him. Hence we may say that the Nuer age-sets are not regiments, and indeed have no specific military functions, but that since age and the ability to bear arms are necessarily related it happens that active warriors are recruited from certain age-sets. On the other hand the social and economic relations of the age-set system are outstanding and it is in them rather than in its ritual that we must look for its significance.

In its economic relations Nuer social life comprises three groups of persons—the women, the men, and the boys. The productive labour of women differs in many respects from that of men but the most prominent distinction between their activities is in milking the cattle. A man may not milk the cows. This is not simply a customary division of labour, as in cooking for example, but is a ritual prohibition or taboo. Were a man to milk a cow all sorts of misfortunes would follow, in particular the death of the cow. The restriction of milking to women has far-reaching effects on their position in Nuer society. But in this respect boys are classed with the women, for they are allowed to milk the cows until they have been initiated into manhood. Consequently initiation means that a boy ceases to milk; he severs his association with women's work; he becomes a man in the sense that he joins the men's group as distinct from the women's group in social life.

If cessation from milking is the most outstanding change in a boy's occupations after initiation it is by no means the only one, for his whole